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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

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National Intelligence Council

NIC No. 05580-85
7 November 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM: George Kolt
National Intelligence Officer for Europe

SUBJECT: NIC Collective Review of Estimates

1. I agree with you that there can be some improvement in the collaborative efforts of the NIOs to produce well-rounded and comprehensive estimates. But I think the major improvement that needs to be made is in the area of our interaction with the SRP and I will, therefore, begin the memo with that issue.

2. Our formal rules now call for the SRP to become involved with the estimates process very late. Further this involvement takes the form of a memorandum to the DCI. Thus after the NIO and the drafter, with little or no formal help, have come up with a product which they feel comfortable, they are faced with very pointed, formal -- and, I must admit, often justified -- criticisms from the SRP. I tried to alleviate this problem upon being appointed as NIO but have met with mixed success. My attempt consisted of getting the informal comments, written or oral, of SRP members during the drafting stage of the TORs and paper. While some SRP members were happy to participate, others thought that such early involvement would affect the objectivity of their memo to the DCI and refused. Those who did accept to participate often gave me good advice, with [] being particularly and consistently very helpful. But even here there were problems. In one instance I started an NIE at the specific suggestion of a since departed SRP member, obtained and incorporated into the TORs his suggestions (as well as those of another SRP member) only to have the panel as a whole decree -- after the draft was produced -- that the subject itself did not merit NIE treatment. I thus concluded that a more formal change of procedures is desirable. My suggestions are:

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- Upon the start of work on an NIE/SNIE the SRP should assign prime responsibility for that particular NIE to one of its members.
- That SRP member should be involved in the initial TOR and draft discussions between the NIO, the drafter and other interested NIOs.
- Once the formal TORs or draft are produced the SRP member should explain the genesis of the NIE to other SRP members and, based on the collective judgment of the SRP, write a critique -- much as is now done but hopefully with fewer suggestions for major changes -- and send it to the NIO rather than the DCI.
- The NIO would then make the changes he deemed advisable and send the revised TORs/draft to the DCI with a copy of the SRP critique and his own explanation of how the SRP suggestions had or had not been incorporated into the draft.

In essence, the last two tics pretty well embody how we are operating now with the exception that the DCI currently gets more paperwork than he needs to and in a confused fashion: first he gets the SRP critique without a backup copy of the TORs or draft and later he again gets the SRP critique along with the NIOs comments and with the draft. The suggestions in the last two tics therefore simply reduce the inputs to the DCI into one comprehensive package. From the NIO's perspective, however, the major change would be in the suggestions of the first two tics, namely that he would be getting SRP assistance along the way rather than a bucket of cold water after much work had been done.

3. Regarding the collective review of estimates by the NIOs I do not think that we are in bad shape. I believe that when there are crosscutting interests in an NIE, the NIO chairman of the paper does touch base with others who interests are affected. Thus Fritz and I always touch base with each other on our Soviet-East European NIEs. Recently, as you know, Julian Nall kept me closely apprised of progress in his European SDI technology NIE so that I was able to step in and give him assistance when DIA came up with objections to the political aspects of the paper. If I were to categorize NIEs on a substantive basis I would say that we produce basically three types: those that affect one region almost exclusively [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], those that affect two or three regions/functions, and finally those of global geopolitical significance. On the NIEs that affect one region I think we can leave well enough alone. On those that affect one or more regions/functions, our aim should be to ensure that all the proper NIOs are involved. On those of geopolitical significance I think we should use dedicated combined NIC/SRP meeting to discuss the paper at its inception.

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4. Specifically I would propose that:

- The NIOs be enjoined to send TORs and later NIE drafts to all appropriate NIOs. The other NIOs would then make any comments or suggestions they deem appropriate. Sometimes these comments would best be made at a meeting of all those involved in the NIE, including the SRP member shepherding that particular NIE. But, as we have found out through previous experience, it is often difficult to get NIOs together for such meetings -- which is why this practice always falls into disuse and why this memo is being written. The less formal and less ideal approach I suggest may endure better.
- As a double check on the NIO chairman, all NIOs should receive the weekly work-in progress report which is compiled for Herb and volunteer their views on NIEs of interest to them to the NIO chairman even if these views had not been previously solicited. Except for a reviewing in the SRP, these suggestions do not represent much of a change from our current procedures, but I think they suffice.

5. As for NIEs of global geopolitical importance, I think we have had one session of the type I am suggesting: An NIO/SRP meeting chaired by Herb on the NIE done in the Spring of 1983 on the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] All who participated found it extremely interesting and useful. I think more of this should be done. Three to five times a year strikes me as about right. For example, the NIEs on [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and the IIM on [REDACTED] would be candidates for such a meeting. In general, it would be up to the Chairman and Vice Chairman NIC to determine the NIEs to be considered. As for the time of the meetings, they could either be prolongations of the Tuesday NIO meeting or the Thursday NIC meetings. My preference would be for the former because the more restricted audience would probably produce more operational suggestions.

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George Kolt

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